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EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING AND AT-RISK YOUTH:

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

Prepared by

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for the Goal Based Education Program
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

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ABSTRACT

Characteristics and practices of effective schools have been identified and it is important to determine whether these practices work with at-risk youth. Effective schools research may yield useful knowledge in educating at-risk youth or research could warn that the effective schools movement could threaten the education of at-risk youth if not accompanied by support for potential dropouts. Characteristics of effective schools include affective school leadership, the belief that carefully planned instruction will work and students will learn, close monitoring of student progress, and a clearly described and family implemented discipline code. Although students come to school with various socioeconomic factors associated with being at risk, the school's environment still affects the students. Successful schools have a positive impact on all students' achievement; less successful schools promote lower expectations and provide little support. Successful dropout prevention programs often separate dropouts from other students, relate work and education, and have low student-teacher ratios with counseling support. Many features of effective schools are consistent with successful programs for at-risk youth such as staff commitment, strong leadership, and fair discipline. Unlike effective schools, successful at-risk youth programs are small with a narrow curriculum focus. The knowledge of alternative programs for at-risk youth seems to support findings and recommendations of effective school researchers, with differences primarily concerning curriculum goals or purposes of education. (ABL)

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Effective Schooling Practices and At-Risk Youth:

What the Research Shows

Prepared by Greg Druian
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I. What is the Question?

There is today a growing consensus that the characteristics of effective schools can be identified and described. An emerging question is "How widely can these characteristics be applied?" Recent studies, for instance, cite the efficacy of effective schooling practices with American Indian programs and in Title I programs.

The question of effective, high-quality education means many things to many people--some would like our young people to be better educated in the "basic skills;" others are concerned that schools prepare "technologically literate" youth; and still others want schools to be places where kids learn discipline, citizenship and positive democratic values. While all of these concerns are serious, an even deeper and more pervasive concern is whether we as a nation are going to fulfill the promise that ALL young people will receive a quality education.

For many researchers, the problem of who will receive an education is as important as the problem of how to bring about excellence in education. Some disturbing findings have surfaced:

- Most experts agree that some 30 percent of youth in school now will drop out prior to graduating.
- There does not at this time appear to be a good definition or even description of who these youth are. (Mann)

- Based on what is known about the dropout-prone, there is every indication that their numbers will increase in coming years.
- Society will need to bear profound economic costs for failing to educate these young persons. (Levin)

Given, however, that we know something about what makes schools effective, it seems worthwhile to ask the question whether the techniques, processes and procedures which arguably work in schools will also get results with at-risk youth in schools.

The question is urgent for two reasons. First, there is the obvious likelihood that the effective schools research will yield knowledge which can be applied in providing quality education to at-risk students. Second, it is equally important to point out that some researchers sound the warning that the effective schools movement itself could constitute a threat to education for at-risk youth if it is not accompanied with supports necessary to accomodate the special needs of those likely to be dropouts. (Hamilton, 1986 ; McDill, Natriello & Pallas, 1985a, 1985b, 1986; Levin, 1986)

Levin (p. 13) puts the matter quite bluntly:

> The unique needs of the educationally disadvantaged cannot be fully or effectively addressed by reforms of a general nature, such as increasing course requirements, raising teacher salaries, or increasing the amount of instructional time. While these reforms may be desirable on their own merits, they should not be viewed as a substitute for direct and comprehensive strategies to solve the problems of the disadvantaged. In the absence of specific remedial programs for the disadvantaged, the general reforms may overwhelm the abilities of ever larger numbers of them to meet the requirements for high school completion.

The intention of this paper is to take a first step towards answering the question whether there is a "fit" between techniques shown to be effective with at-risk youth and the conclusions reached by the effective

schools researchers. This line of questioning will yield one of two possible answers. First, it is possible that we will find that what works for at-risk youth is inconsistent with effective schools findings: we may find that there is a population of youth requiring a "separate" kind of educational experience. The second possiblity is that there is substantial overlap between what works with at-risk youth and what works in effective schools: we may find that the effective schools research provides a useful framework for working with students who might otherwise receive poor or no education.

II. Characteristics of Effective Schools

In recent years substantial efforts have been made in identifying characteristics which distinguish effective schools. The term 'effective,' in this context, refers to schools where there is satisfaction on the part of parents, pupils and educators that the pupils are learning what they need to learn. For the purposes of this paper, the intent is not to provide an exhaustive review of the effective schools literature but to indicate key characteristics of effective schools which can serve as touchstones for comparison with practices that work with at-risk youth.

While there is little purpose in ranking the relative importance of characteristics of effective schools, surely one of the most widely noted and carefully documented characteristics is school leadership. School leadership generally is described in terms of the role of the building principal, and effective school leadership means both having a clear instructional focus for the school and using this focus as a means of organizing priorities. It also means using this focus as the basis for evaluating school efforts.

Leadership in this sense can refer to many different leadership styles--it does not necessarily mean that the principal is dominating or overbearing. The key characteristic of successful school leadership seems to be an orientation toward clear instructional goals accompanied by the ability to plan strategies to accomplish the goals. This point is mentioned first because good leadership can be seen as providing the necessary context without which other practices mentioned here cannot thrive.

Hand-in-hand with leadership go the beliefs that students can and will learn and that carefully planned instruction will work. In effective schools, in other words, a positive attitude on the part of instructional staff and others involved is attendant upon clearly stated and widely accepted goals. Staff willingly takes accountability for providing the instruction that enables young people to meet learning goals.

A third characteristic of effective schools that consistently recurs in the literature is the practice of closely monitoring student progress toward learning goals. Monitoring takes place frequently, and additional assistance is provided when needed. In this way, learners are able to make 'mid-course' corrections as often as needed. Instructional techniques are tailored to results of monitoring activities.

Finally, effective schools are characterized by a clearly described code of discipline which is administered fairly and impartially. This code supports the achievement of instructional objectives.

Although the foregoing sketch of the findings of effective schooling researchers may not be complete, it delineates the most important points.

III. Conditions Associated with At-risk Students

What conditions predict whether a student will be 'at-risk?' What conditions predict the likelihood of a student dropping out of school before graduation? What conditions predict whether a student will go through school having a frustrating and unrewarding time--regardless of actual graduation?

Researchers have found that it is possible to identify potential dropouts early--as early as elementary school (McDill, Natriello and Pallas, 1986). Hodgkinson (p. 12) found in his research a widely held view that "we intervene too late in the course of a student's development, that certain parts of the profile of a drop-out prone student may be visible as early as the third grade."

At the same time, there are a great variety of conditions associated with being "at-risk." Researchers who have investigated characteristics correlated with a high likelihood of dropping out mention demographic, socioeconomic and institutional characteristics such as:

- Living in high-growth states
- Living in unstable school districts
- Being a member of a low-income family
- Having low academic skills (though not necessarily low intelligence)
- Having parents who are not high school graduates
- Speaking English as a second language
- Being single-parent children
- Having negative self-perceptions; being bored or alienated; having low self-esteem
- Choosing alternatives: males tend to seek paid work as an alternative, while females may drop out to have children or get married

One very important aspect of the problem is that it is clear that populations with these characteristics are growing--so that if there is a correlation with population characteristics and being at-risk, the situation will in all likelihood worsen.

What is the situation? While the issue with at-risk youth is frequently portrayed as a dropping out issue, it seems that the fact of leaving school prior to graduation is only a symptom. For example there is evidence that in many schools a "push-out" syndrome exists. Fine (1986) documents how some schools passively allow students to drop out by withholding any effort to retain them or even to find out what the problem is.

Furthermore, it is very easy to confuse "stopping out" (leaving school for another activity) with "dropping out." And finally who is to say whether dropping out of a poorly supported and/or inadequately staffed school may not leave the student much better off in the long run, particularly if there are alternatives available. The measure of our dealing adequately with the needs of "at-risk" youth should not, probably, be numbers of drop-outs, but should instead be the kinds of instruction and amounts of learning that take place in the school.

The issue is the kind and quality of learning experienced by the student while in school. When the issue is defined in terms of the experience, it is an issue upon which the school can act. It is therefore interesting to note results of studies of the actual determinants of dropping out.

Data from the "High School and Beyond" study have been carefully analyzed to determine whether there are characteristics which effectively predict whether a youth will become a dropout. Wehlage and Rutter (1986)

note that "the most powerful determinants (according to the HS&B data) of dropping out are low expectations about the amount of schooling a student will attain and low grades combined with disciplinary problems, truancy being the most common offense" (p. 4) . They add that while the school can't do much about the socioeconomic factors that are associated with being at-risk, the things found to be determinants are things that are very much under the school's control.

These findings are supported by Rock and his colleagues (in AASA 1985) who analyzed the same data and found that factors which helped students succeed "have a similar impact on achievement gains for all groups of students, whether white or black, male or female, or enrolled in a public or Catholic school" (p. 63) . In other words, school effects are school effects and they have impact on all pupils equally and without regard to socioeconomic conditions.

Rutter et. al. (1979) reached similar conclusions in their study of the effects of schools in London: "...children were more likely to show good behaviour and good scholastic attainments if they attended some schools than if they attended others." (pp. 177-178) . This conclusion was reached after controlling for family background and personal characteristics. In one final study worth mentioning, Sexton (1985) found that students transferring from a school with a high dropout rate to another with a lower dropout rate reflected the lower rate in the extent to which they actually left school.

It is probably important to distinguish between social characteristics of at-risk youth and the conditions in schools which inhibit or fail to bring about learning. It is becoming increasingly clear that at-risk youth are those who attend certain types of

schools--specifically schools with little support, which promote low expectations and which have little or no curriculum focus.

IV. What schooling strategies are effective with at-risk students?

The title of this section should probably include the phrase, "and how do we know?" Hodgkinson (1985), for instance, believes that a great deal is being done, but it is not widely shared and is not well publicized. He asserts that "Many localities, however, have developed excellent drop-out prevention programs" and there is a "major need to coordinate and share information on what works and why." He notes that successful programs "combine intensive, individualized training in the basic skills with work-related projects" and finds that "When the relation between education and work becomes clear, most of these potential drop-outs can be motivated to stay in school and perform at a higher level." (p. 12).

Green and Baker (1986) report on a literature search and on their questionnaire survey of initiatives for high-risk youth in the Pacific Northwest states. They find that much, indeed, seems to be under way, but that practitioners do not share a common taxonomy or framework for discussing and sharing what they are doing.

Hamilton (1986), reviewing the ERIC index, found "a surprisingly small number of reports and only a few (with) both program descriptions and data indicating program effectiveness." He was, however, able to find that successful programs seemed to exhibit these characteristics (p. 410):

- Dropouts are separated from other students
- The programs have strong vocational components

- Out of classroom learning is utilized
- Programs tend to be intensive--small, individualized with low student-teacher ratios--and tend to offer more counseling than the regular school curriculum

In the review undertaken for this paper, findings are grouped into three categories: large, federally-funded programmatic efforts; pull-out programs; and classroom-based studies.

1. Federally Funded Studies

In one of the greatest evaluation efforts ever undertaken in support of a social experiment, a huge 'knowledge development' component was made part of the Labor Department's Youth Employment Demonstration Projects Act (YEDPA) in the late 70s and early 80s. An enormous amount of information was generated by projects funded under this program. In general it can be said that the research supported the hypothesis that paid work experience tended to help enable low-income youth to remain in school longer. While the school curriculum often benefitted from additional resources, especially resources related to career skills, these were normally not permanent additions, and were not always available to all students. Three features of these efforts are notable: first, participants were generally required to develop a "career plan"; second, there was a conscious effort to build the program around competencies to be attained by participants; and third, in many of the programs, participants were provided with services, where possible, which would enable them to stay a part of the program.

Experience-Based Career Education (EBCE) is a programmatic effort that differs from some others in that, in many cases, it attempts to be tightly interwoven into the school curriculum instead of added to it. Extensive evaluation of EBCE found that students participating in it

performed at least as well (or no worse) on standardized measures of academic learning than nonparticipants.

2. Pull-out Programs

Wehlage (1983) analyses several programs that successfully involve marginal students in school work and try to keep them in school. His analysis cuts across a breadth of school contexts, and he finds that alienation from the school, daily reinforced by teachers and administrators, is one of the most important threats to the retention of at-risk youth. He asks, "When otherwise normal adolescents who have sufficient intelligence to succeed in school...become alienated and reject the school, should not educators attempt to find ways to respond constructively to this significant portion of their clientele?" (p. 16).

Wehlage's answer is that educators unequivocally can make a difference--that teachers and administrators can develop ways to retain at-risk youth and involve them in learning. He criticizes programs which stress only "basic skills" or "vocational education" or "career education" alone as being too narrow in focus and thus of limited value. He argues that schools must provide young people with experiences of success in order to counteract the messages of failure he finds these young people are constantly receiving. He argues further that we reinforce the message of failure by not expecting enough from the marginal student--we tend to place these students in "slow" classes and to deny them access to challenging experiences. Indeed the failure to develop appropriately challenging experiences for these students is one of Wehlage's major criticisms of public schools. He would have schools stress the development of abstract thinking (in the Piagetan sense) and the development of social skills.

In the six effective programs which he outlines, he finds that there are several characteristics of effective programs. First, there is the group of Administrative and Organizational Characteristics common among successful programs. Small size allows attention to individual needs of students through frequent face-to-face interactions and monitoring. Program autonomy allows teachers the flexibility to respond quickly. Decision-making authority gives teachers a sense of empowerment, which in turn heightens their commitment to the program.

Next, characteristics grouped under Teacher Culture refer to the sense of professional accountability for program success and the optimism/confidence teachers have in the program; the extended role of the teacher in dealing with the "whole student" which create in students a sense that they are cared for; and the sense of collegiality which binds the team of teachers working in the program together.

A third set of characteristics is called Student Culture. As Wehlage says, "The single most valued characteristic of the programs is the 'family atmosphere.'" (p.36) Wehlage reports that successful programs do not suppress criticism but instead provide a positive and constructive atmosphere in which criticism can occur. Another characteristic of student culture is cooperative learning, where help may be obtained from other students or teachers and where team learning takes place.

Wehlage finds that the most important curricular characteristic of effective programs for at-risk students is the experiential curriculum. He makes the very important point that a fundamental difference between an experiential program and a work/vocational program is that the latter tend to focus on monetary rewards and to offer less opportunity for

students to take challenging roles and opportunities. Experiential activities, on the other hand, offer possibilities for maximizing adolescent development that are important. Wehlage says "We believe there is sufficient evidence about the effects of experiential education (that meet the criteria below to argue for it as an Essential Component of and Program for Marginal Students" (author's emphasis).

The criteria for experiential education are that the program:

- should offer "optimal challenge with manageable conflict"
- should provide a young person an opportunity to exercise initiative and responsibility
- should provide the young person with a task that has integrity (i.e., is not "make-work") and thus reinforces the person's sense of dignity
- should provide the young person with "a sense of competence and success"
- must engage the student in reflection about their experiences (pp. 38-40)

3. Classroom-based studies

A third kind of study seeks to identify whether there are schools successfully working with dropout-prone students and if so, to describe the techniques they use. Edmonds (1979) is unquivocal in his assertion that "all children are eminently educable and that the behavior of the school is critical in determining the quality of that education." Both in his own research on schools serving urban poor and in his review of similar research undertaken by others he finds that there are indeed effective schools which demonstrate these characteristics:

- strong administrative leadership
- a climate of expectation in which "no children are permitted to fall below minimum but efficacious levels of achievement"

- an orderly, but not rigid, atmosphere that is "conducive to the instructional business at hand"
- an attitude which makes it clear that "pupil acquisition of basic school skills takes precedence over all other school activities"
- the ability to divert resources "from other business in furtherance of the fundamental objectives" when necessary
- means for frequent monitoring of pupil progress, specifically, means "by which the principal and the teachers remain constantly aware of pupil progress in relationship to instructional objectives"

A somewhat different tack is taken by McDill, Natriello and Pallas (1986) who have synthesized an extensive number of research studies and evaluation efforts in an attempt to examine the potential consequences of tougher school standards on students who are at risk of dropping out. Their work is included in this section because they also focus on classroom-based research. They examine first the possible positive consequences, and then the possible negative consequences.

The nub of the question is whether increased standards will make it even harder for at-risk students to succeed in school. On the positive side, when students are confronted with challenging standards, they are more likely to pay attention in class and spend time on homework. In the studies they cite, class cutting is notably higher in classes which put a low demand on students than in classes with higher demands. These findings hold for students of all abilities. In general McDill et al. conclude that "results in several different lines of research provide hope that raising standards will lead students to work somewhat harder, at least when standards are originally quite low, and that greater student effort will lead to somewhat higher student achievement." (p.149)

Nevertheless there must come a point where expectations are too high for some students to succeed without additional assistance of some kind.

The potential negative effects are 1) that greater academic stratification will occur and students will have fewer choices available to them; and 2) more demanding time requirements on the part of schools will conflict with other demands on students.

These researchers focus on "alterable characteristics in schools" to minimize the risk of unwanted effects. They note that size of the school (p. 157) is one of the most important factors associated with having fewer disorders, higher achievement, higher levels of student participation and more feelings of satisfaction with school.

Other factors include an individualized curriculum and instructional approach; climate, which is concerned with matters of governance (the importance of clear rules consistently enforced); the system of academic rewards (they note that researchers "have found it useful to employ a variety of alternative, detailed reward systems such as learning contracts, token economies and grading systems that base evaluation on individual effort and progress" (p. 159); and normative emphasis on academic excellence. Finally, at the classroom level, these researchers assert that a clear orientation to work and learning in the classroom is essential before approaches such individualized instruction can succeed. They also assert that without the orientation to learning, even the best teachers will be unlikely to succeed in positively affecting the dropout-prone.

V. Conclusions

As this discussion demonstrates, many features of successful programs for at-risk youth are highly consistent with the findings of effective schools research. The primary characteristic of successful

programs for at-risk youth seems to be a strong, even intense, level of commitment on the part of instructional staff. As with effective schools, where the principal is active in the day-to-day operation of the instructional program, the leader takes a strong interest in the operation of the program; traditional roles and role relationships are not as important as taking the proper action to achieve school/program goals. In both cases, there is a clear belief that students will succeed.

Another characteristic that emerges from the study of successful programs for at-risk youth is that small program size enables the development of close, responsive relations between teachers and students. This enables frequent monitoring of performance, and it also enables accurate prescription of corrective action--which can often take advantage of a wide variety of support services or instructional techniques--when it is needed.

Evaluation of programs consistently mentions strong leadership as one of the factors contributing most to their success. Of course it may well be that leadership emerges more easily in the context of a program, or more likely perhaps, that without strong leadership, there wouldn't have been a program in the first place. The point seems to be, however, that it is the quality of the leadership rather than the fact of the program, that makes for success. The policy consequence might well be consideration of ways of developing leadership instead of ways of developing new programs.

Finally, it should be noted that one of the strongest criticisms of schools made by drop-outs is that the discipline is unfair and arbitrary. Successful programs that serve drop-outs are characterized as having fair--though sometimes tough--programs of discipline. The programs clarify what offenses are and what the punishment is.

Differences between techniques used to serve at-risk youth and techniques used in effective schools have to do with the types of goals which are pursued, and not with the manner in which they are pursued. At the secondary level, the most important characteristic of programs serving at-risk youth is indeed that they ARE programs; the ones reviewed in this paper are pull-out programs. It may well be that the only way in which certain youth in certain schools can be reached at all is to take them completely out of the school context and build a program minus the added burden of overcoming the residue of bad feeling towards the school they may have built up.

Practitioners who work with at-risk youth, however, might consider whether there is more instructional value in shaping experiences in which at-risk pupils interact with a variety of other pupils. For instance, Ward (1986) notes that cooperative learning groups (small groups with diverse backgrounds working on common tasks) "produce significant gains in academic achievement for minority students" (in desegregated classrooms) (p. 6). The fact of a pull-out program seems to limit what can be achieved with grouping.

The fact that at-risk youth are served by programs rather than through an effort on the part of the school to meet the needs of these youth has another consequence. The curriculum, even in successful programs, tends to be limited and to track students into fairly narrow channels. Although it would be hard to pinpoint, the assumption seems to be made that at-risk students need a career-oriented education focused generally on non-professional occupations. The point is not whether this is appropriate or not for all or even any of these students, but rather that the students don't seem to have a choice. Indeed the question of

limited curriculum never even seems to arise, perhaps because more fundamental needs are being met.

On the other hand, many successful programs for at-risk youth make use of their autonomy to develop very rich curricular offerings, particularly in the area of experiential learning. The benefits of this type of learning may well be something that deserves investigation by effective schools researchers. Levin calls attention to peer teaching and cooperative learning as "two approaches that seem to work particularly well for disadvantaged students" (p. 19).

Another consequence of the fact that the needs of at-risk youth are served primarily by programs is that it may be difficult to decide where the program stops. Indeed the temptation is to develop a comprehensive program, one which owing the special needs of the population to be served, may require components which go far beyond the capacity of the school itself to implement or be responsible for. For instance, Levin (p. 13) asserts that the major components of a strategy to solve the problems of disadvantaged students would have to include:

- Providing enriched preschool experiences
- Improving the effectiveness of the home as a learning environment
- Improving the effectiveness of the school for addressing the needs of the disadvantaged, and
- Assisting those from linguistically different backgrounds to acquire skills in standard English

These conclusions suggest the recommendation that persons designing programs for 'at-risk' youth make use of the effective schools research base. Certainly in studies noted above, when such factors as student ability, student SES and ethnic characteristics are controlled, effective

schooling practices are shown to produce gains. But have strategies for dealing with at-risk youth acknowledged or made use of these findings?

The accumulated knowledge of alternative programs for at-risk or marginal young people seems to support substantially the findings and recommendations of the effective school researchers. Where the differences lie seem principally to concern curriculum goals or purposes of education. Nonetheless, given the set of goals professed by each "side," the means of attaining them show great congruence.

The conclusion to which this analysis seems to point can be summed up in words of Ronald Edmonds, (1979, p. 23):

> (a) We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us; (b) We already know more than we need to do that; and (c) Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far.

Annotated Source List

American Association of School Administrators, "Raising Standards in the Schools: Problems and Solutions." (AASA Critical Issues Report) Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators, 1985.

Batsche, Catherine, et al. "Indicators of Effective Programming for School-to-Work Transition Skills Among Dropouts." Normal, IL: Illinois State University, ED 246 235, June 1984.

The writers examine vocational programs to find out what works to increase retention of high school dropouts. The most interesting finding in this study is that students rated two factors very highly -- support from other students and financial aid -- which were rated low by administrators.

Fine, Michelle. "Why Urban Adolescents Drop Into and Out of Pubic High School." Teachers College Record, 393-409, Spring 1986.

Edmonds, Ronald. "Effective Schools for the Urban Poor." Educational Leadership. 15-24, October 1979.

Good, Thomas L. and Brophy, Jere E. Looking in Classrooms. New York: Harper and Row, 1984.

Chapter 4 "Teacher Expectations" presents persuasive evidence of the influence of a teacher's expectations on pupil performance; these effects occur regardless of the pupil's background or SES.

Green, Karen Reed and Baker, Andrea. "Promising Practices for High Risk Youth in the Northwest Region: Initial Search." Portland: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, June 1986.

The authors review national studies as well as studies and programs from the Northwest Region. They find that while most of what is considered "effective" or "promising" is a matter of expert testimony, as opposed to carefully designed research, common threads of successful programs usually involve staffing, methodology, curriculum and administrative support.

Hamilton, Stephen F. "Raising Standards and Reducing the Dropout Rate." In "School Dropouts: Patterns and Policies" Teachers College Record, 410-429, Spring 1986.

This careful and sensitive article explores issues related to the effect that 'raising standards' could have on dropout rates in secondary schools. He finds promise in recent research which suggests that the classroom might not be the best environment for learning.

Hodgkinson, Harold L. "All One System: Demographics of Education, Kindergarten through Graduate School." Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership Inc., 1985.

A somewhat comprehensive exposition of his theories about how demographic changes will affect the continuum of education; he argues very persuasively that demographic trends will force the educational system to confront squarely the issue of high risk youth.

Hodgkinson, Harold L. "What's Ahead for Education." Principal, 6-11, January 1986.

A review of the demographic factors impacting American education, especially with respect to their implications for elementary and middle level instruction. Noteworthy is his finding that it is high-growth states which will have the largest problems in dealing with at-risk youth.

Levin, Henry M. "Educational Reform for Disadvantaged Students: An Emerging Crisis." (NEA Search). Washington, D. C.; National Educational Association, 1986.

Mann, Dale. "Dropout Prevention--Getting Serious About Programs that Work." NASSP Bulletin, 66-73, April 1986.

Mann finds that schools are "doing a lot and learning a little" in dealing with dropouts; he calls for an effort to analyze carefully what is being done to whom, and with what effect.

McDill, Edward L., Natriello, Gary and Pallas, Aaron M. "Raising Standards and Retaining Students: The Impact of the Reform Recommendations on Potential Dropouts." Baltimore: Center for Social Organization of Schools, The Johns Hopkins University, Report No. 358, April 1985. (Reprinted in slightly revised form in Review of Educational Research, 55:4, 415-433, Winter 1985).

This closely argued paper draws extensively on available research to examine possible positive and possible negative impacts of recent reform recommendations. They conclude that the challenge of educators is to find ways to provide the support that potential dropouts will need to successfully meet heightened standards.

McDill, Edward L.; Natriello, Gary and Pallas, Aaron M. "Uncommon Sense: School Administrators, School Reform and Potential Dropouts." (ED 257 927) Prepared for presentation at the National Invitational Conference on Holding Power and Dropouts, Teachers College, Columbia University, February, 1985.

This paper also presents possible positive and negative impacts of school reforms. It focuses specifically on possible roles for the school administrator in maximizing the effect on potential dropouts.

McDill, Edward L.; Natriello, Gary and Pallas, Aaron M. "A Population at Risk: Potential Consequences of Tougher School Standards for Student Dropouts." American Journal of Education, 94:2, 135-181, February 1986.

The researchers spell out and justify a research agenda focusing on monitoring the impact of programs with New Standards; determine school characteristics associated with successful education of at-risk students; provide students with services and flexible time options; and maintain high standards for all students.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. The Northwest Report. Portland, OR: July/August 1986.

This issue reviews a new publication, the "Effective Compensatory Education Sourcebook" (Griswold, Cotton and Hansen), which finds that program effectiveness in Chapter 1 schools — in terms of student achievement, attendance rates and parent support — is tied to the implementation of effective schooling practices.

O'Connor, Patrick. "Dropout Prevention Programs that Work." OSSC Bulletin, 29:4, December 1985.

This paper is aimed at the practitioner and attempts to synthesize findings from research and ongoing programs.

Rutter, Michael et. al. Fifteen Thousand Hours. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Sexton, Porter W. "Trying to Make It Real Compared to What? Implications of High School Dropout Statistics." Journal of Educational Equity and Leadership, 5:2, 92-106, Summer 1985.

In this article, the author presents his provocative finding that at-risk students who change schools are likely to reflect the dropout patterns of their new school instead of their old school. This thesis supports the notion that school expectations play a critical role in student success.

Squires, David A.; Huitt, William G. and Segars, John K. "Effective Schools and Classrooms: A Research-Based Perspective." Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Chapter 4, "Effective Schools: What Research Says" examines factors determined by research to be characteristic of effective schools. Several studies are reviewed, and they are fairly unanimous in reporting the importance of student engagement, student success, teacher management of instruction and supervision by the principal as critical elements in effective schools.

Teachers College Record. "School Dropouts: Patterns and Policies" (Special Issue). 87:3, Spring 1986.

This collection of articles examines dropout patterns among American youth and policies which have been developed to reduce the number of dropouts. While the authors represent a breadth of viewpoints, they seem to agree that 1) success in the area is possible, and 2) a substantial amount of further research in the area is necessary.

Ward, Beatrice A. "Instructional Grouping in the Classroom." Prepared for the Goal Based Education Program, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, July 1986.

Describes how instructional grouping can be used (and how it should not be used) to promote learning in the classroom.

Wehlage, Gary G. "Effective Programs for the Marginal High School Student." PDK Fastback 197. Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1983.

Wehlage cites six effective programs and elicits characteristics of an effective anti-dropout program. This paper is notable both for the power of the writer's argument and for the confidence he has that excellent programs for the dropout prone can be developed. The paper is full of suggestions for the practitioner.

Wehlage, Gary G. and Rutter, Robert A. "Evaluation of a Model Program for At-Risk Students." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA, 1986.

This paper presents a model program for at-risk students and evaluative evidence in support of the claim that it has positive effects on them.